

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 6066

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS CASC IT SY US VT (BATES, JONATHAN)

SUBJ: BATES CASE: ITALIANS RECOMMEND AGAINST APPROACH TO VATICAN

REF: STATE 121067: ROME 5833

BEGIN SUMMARY: ITALIAN AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS, BUCCI, HAS STRONGLY ADVISED AGAINST SEEKING VATICAN APPROACH TO SYRIANS ON BEHALF OF BATES. BUCCI BELIEVES THAT SUCH INTERVENTION COULD FURTHER POLEMICIZE CASE AND MIGHT CAUSE SYRIANS TO DEAL HARSHLY WITH JONATHAN AS MEANS OF " BLACKMAILING" USG. BUCCI EXPRESSED VIEW IT IN BEST INTEREST OF BATES TO ALLOW CASE TO PROCEED ROUTINELY AVOIDING DIRECT OR INDIRECT US INTERVENTION. RE HUMAN-ITARIAN ASPECT, BUCCI IS OF OPINION THAT APPEAL ON THESE GROUNDS SHOULD BE RESERVED FOR USE AS LAST RESORT SHOULD SYRIANS CONVICT JONATHAN AND IMPOSE HEAVY SENTENCE. BUCCI STATED THAT PREVIOUS VATICAN INTERVENTIONS IN SIMILAR BUT MUCH LESS IMPORTANT CASES HAVE BEEN INEFFECTIVE. FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS ENDORSED BUCCI' S RECOMMENDATION AGAINST SEEKING VATICAN INTERVENTION. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JUNE 27, RESPONSIBLE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL CONVEYED SUBSTANCE OF TELEGRAM UST RECEIVED FROM ITALIAN AMBASSADOR TO DAMASCUS BUCCI RESPONDING TO MINISTRY' S QUERY
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ABOUT INADVISABILITY OF SEEKING VATICAN APPROACH TO SYRIANS ON BEHALF OF BATES.

3. BUCCI EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING OF MRS. BATES MOTIVATIONS IN SUGGESTING APPROACH TO VATICAN, BUT HE STRONGLY ADVISED AGAINST SUCH APPROACH.

4. BUCCI EXPLAINED RATIONALE FOR HIS VIEW THAT VATICAN INTERVENTION NOT RPT NOT ADVISABLE. ACCORDING BUCCI, IT IS HIS VIEW THAT BEST WAY TO PROTECT JONATHAN' S INTERESTS IS TO ENDEAVOR TO REDUCE HIS CASE TO THE STATUS OF A " ROUTINE MATTER". BUCCI EXPRESSED BELIEF THAT TRIAL SHOULD PROCEED QUIETLY IN LOW- KEY ATMOSPHERE, BUT THAT " EVERY JUDICIAL MEANS" SHOULD BE EMPLOYED.

5. BUCCI STATED OPINION THAT " DIRECT OR INDIRECT" EVIDENCE OF USG INTERVENTION IN CASE IS NOT RPT NOT ADVISABLE SINCE THIS COULD POLEMICIZE CASE IN SYRIAN EYES, AND MIGHT PUSH SYRIANS TO BE SEVERE WITH JONATHAN IN ORDER SUBSEQUENTLY TO " BLACKMAIL" USG.

6. BUCCI REITERATED THAT IT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND THAT SYRIAN JUDGES WILL BE REQUIRED TO SHOW " MORE COURAGE" BY ACQUITTING JONATHAN THAN CONDEMNING HIM. ACCORDING BUCCI, JUDGES' TASK WILL BE MADE EASIER IN ATMOSPHERE OF " SILENCE AND IN CONTEXT OF STRICTLY JUDICIAL CONFRONTATION."

7. RE EFFECTIVENESS OF VATICAN APPEAL FOR JONATHAN ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, BUCCI QUESTIONED ADVISABILITY OF SUCH STEP AT THIS STAGE OF JUDICIAL PROCESS. HE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT HUMANITARIAN APPEAL SHOULD BE RESERVED AS A " LAST RESORT", AND IMPLIED THAT SUCH APPEAL SHOULD BE HELD FOR POSSIBILITY THAT SYRIANS MIGHT CONVICT JONATHAN AND IMPOSE HEAVY SENTENCE.

8. IN CONCLUSION, BUCCI STATED THAT EXPERIENCE IN DAMASCUS HAS SHOWN THAT VATICAN INTERVENTION WITH SYRIANS ON CASES MUCH LESS SENSITIVE AND IMPORTANT THAN THAT OF BATES HAS BEEN INEFFECTIVE.

9. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL STATED THAT MINISTRY CONCURS WITH BUCCI' S JUDGMENT THAT SEEKING VATICAN APPEAL TO SYRIANS ON BEHALF OF BATES IS INADVISABLE AT THIS TIME.

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10. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT BUCCI IS BEST JUDGE OF ON- THE- SPOT SITUATION, AND RECOMMEND THAT DEPARTMENT CONCUR IN BUCCI' S RECOMMENDATION THAT NO RPT NO APPROACH BE MADE FOR VATICAN INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF BATES. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO INSTRUCT EMBASSY ATHENS TO CONVEY BUCCI' S VIEWS TO MRS. BATES. WE WILL DEFER REPLYING TO ORAM' S LETTER TO AMBASSADOR UNTIL WE RECEIVE DEPARTMENT' S REACTION TO BUCCI' S RECOMMENDATION. VOLPE

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